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California Wine History Series

Lucius Powers

THE FRESNO AREA AND THE CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY

With an Introduction by

Maynard A. Amerine

An Interview Conducted by

Ruth Teiser

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Lucius Powers



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## PREFACE

The California Wine Industry Oral History Series, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1969, the year noted as the bicentenary of continuous wine making in this state. It was undertaken through the action and with the financing of the Wine Advisory Board, and under the direction of University of California faculty and staff advisors at Berkeley and Davis.

The purpose of the series is to record and preserve information on California grape growing and wine making that has existed only in the memories of wine men. In some cases their recollections go back to the early years of this century, before Prohibition. These recollections are of particular value because the Prohibition period saw the disruption of not only the industry itself but also the orderly recording and preservation of records of its activities. Little has been written about the industry from late in the last century until Repeal. There is a real paucity of information on the Prohibition years (1920-1933), although some wine making did continue under supervision of the Prohibition Department. The material in this series on that period, as well as the discussion of the remarkable development of the wine industry in subsequent years (as yet treated analytically in few writings) will be of aid to historians. Of particular value is the fact that frequently several individuals have discussed the same subjects and events or expressed opinions on the same ideas, each from his own point of view.

Research underlying the interviews has been conducted principally in the University libraries at Berkeley and Davis, the California State Library, and in the library of the Wine Institute, which has made its collection of in many cases unique materials readily available for the purpose.

Three master indices for the entire series are being prepared, one of general subjects, one of wines, one of grapes by variety. These will be available to researchers at the conclusion of the series in the Regional Oral History Office and at the library of the Wine Institute.





The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to recent California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the Director of The Bancroft Library.

Ruth Teiser  
Project Director  
California Wine Industry  
Oral History Series

1 March 1971  
Regional Oral History Office  
486 The Bancroft Library  
University of California, Berkeley



## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Powers' interview contains many revealing details of agriculture and viticulture in the Fresno area, of grape shipping during Prohibition, of the organization of the California Vineyardists Association, and of the history of the Mt. Tivy Winery. Some, but certainly not all, of the conflicts that arose in the California Wine Association, Fruit Industries, Ltd., the California Vineyardists Association, and the Central Valley Cooperative Winery are touched upon.

There are some interesting sidelights. Was Mr. Powers' recognition in 1934 the first post-Prohibition idea that temperature control for making table wines was necessary in the San Joaquin Valley? He was right, of course, that quality in dessert wines was important to the future of the industry. Too bad the quality route was not tried; that it was not is possibly due to the fifteen to twenty tons per acre production that Mr. Powers mentions elsewhere in the interview.

It is unfortunate too that Powers' interview was not available to the California wine industry in 1935. He tells us that already in that year he could see the dominance of table wines coming--this at a time when 75 per cent of the sales were in dessert wines!

The manipulation of grapes and brandy for legal profit is fully outlined. The history of the Sweet Wine Producers Association is clearly delineated. What is new is Powers' relation to the early power struggle in Washington involving the beer-whiskey-wine complex.

The arguments over the prorate are interesting but now largely forgotten. The same is true of the details of Schenley's and Heublein's interest in wines and brandies. The run-down on the history of the Fresno wineries is also interesting. But on one point modern economic thinking varies from the view Mr. Powers expressed when he said, "Of course, the rise and fall of prices more or less should be borne, I feel, by the grower."

Perhaps more pertinent today is Mr. Powers' conclusion from experience that when any phase of the California agricultural industry becomes profitable it soon becomes overloaded. That conclusion may offer some warning to the present California grape industry.

One can find very few statements in the interview requiring correction: Malaga is a table grape; the University, state colleges and junior colleges were not "hired" to help the industry--they did their work because it was, and is, their job.

Maynard A. Amerine  
Professor, Viticulture and Enology

10 March 1974  
101 Wickson Hall  
University of California at Davis



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Lucius Powers, a member of a prominent pioneer California family, was born in Fresno on July 25, 1901. He has lived in the Fresno area, where his father acquired extensive agricultural holdings, ever since, except for a few years in the late 1930's. His career has been divided among a number of related and sometimes overlapping interests: the practice of law, fruit growing and shipping, winery operation, business management and public affairs.

Mr. Powers attended the University of California at Berkeley and graduated from Boalt Hall in 1926. From 1931 through 1934 he served in the State Assembly. In 1933, shortly before the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment became effective, Mr. Powers organized in behalf of his father the Mt. Tivy Winery. This marked the beginning of nearly two decades of activities in the wine industry. He was active in the Wine Institute; in 1935, for example, he was serving on eight of its sixteen committees.

The interview was conducted in Fresno. There was a preliminary discussion on May 19, 1969. The first session was held on May 20, 1969, in Mr. Powers' office in the Guarantee Savings (previously Mattei) Building. The second session was held on January 20, 1972, in the Helm Building where Mr. Powers had moved his office.

Mr. Powers was an interested and cooperative interviewee, although he was at times impatient with his own lack of memory of details of past events. The transcript of the first part of the interview was sent to him on December 20, 1971, to review before the second session. He made a number of minor revisions and returned it to the interviewer the following spring. The whole interview was then edited by the interviewer to improve continuity and delete some repetitions, and sent to Mr. Powers on November 7, 1973. He returned it with further minor revisions on December 28, 1973. Editing was completed following clarification of several points in the interview by correspondence.

Ruth Teiser  
Interviewer-Editor

22 March 1974  
486 The Bancroft Library  
University of California at Berkeley



(Interview #1 - May 20, 1969)

#### FAMILY HISTORY

Teiser: When we were having a preliminary discussion of this interview yesterday, you mentioned that you had acted as attorney for the California Vineyardists Association.

Powers: Yes, as counsel, doing collecting, one thing and another.\* It's interesting how these farm programs develop from one stage into another. I've seen so much that is helpful out of it all, but growers are peculiar people. They're not too well educated about economics and causes that enter into economic results. But, peculiarly, you always come back to the old axiom of supply and demand.

Teiser: Your family is an old one in California, I believe.

Powers: Yes. My grandfather was Aaron Powers--sailed around the Horn with his brother Lucius on the sailing vessel named the Edward Everett.

Teiser: Is he in that picture you have of Sacramento pioneers, Aaron Powers?

Powers: Yes. And we have quite a bit there in the Bancroft Library. My cousin, Clotilde Grunsky Taylor, did quite a bit of work on our family history.

Teiser: Didn't she edit that book on--

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\*For further discussion of the California Vineyardists Association, see pp. 11-12.





Powers: On Grunsky, the father. It's a lovely thing.\* She sold me a copy. My good friend Cort Majors\*\* was very happy with that. Of course we played football together at Berkeley. The great days of Andy Smith. In 1920 I played center on the freshman team against Cort. The freshman team had to help train the varsity, so we all became well acquainted.

I then played at center in my sophomore year in 1921. I never got my letter because I didn't play enough minutes in the games combined in each season. By the end of my sophomore year I was substitute, or runner-up, to George Latham who was also team captain. 1921 was his last year. But anyway I wanted to improve upon my speed and agility, and I had hammer-toes on both feet then. So I had a very serious operation on both feet. After this operation I thought I'd be back in the line in just a couple of months, but did not realize it'd be more like two years. So in my junior year I just practiced with the team. I couldn't play. 1923 was my senior year with the varsity. Cort Majors was captain of the first Wonder Team in 1920, a very outstanding person.

Teiser: Well, you have a good deal of association with the University.\*\*\* And of course the early history of the state.

Powers: Oh, yes. The two Power brothers, Aaron Hubbard who was my grandfather and Lucius who was my grand-uncle, arrived July 6, 1849, in San Francisco harbor. I have the letters of my grandfather. He was in San Francisco for a while and was sworn in as a deputy constable, 'way back in about 1859. The first letters that I have were written while he lived in Redwood City and Woodside. He helped log the redwoods and floated the trees and cut fir trees and made the poles for the first telegraph line, the continental telegraph line. They also floated the logs in rafts up to San Francisco to provide the piling for the wharves. And he adds--kind of cute--in a letter to his mother and father back in New Hampshire, "I have my oxen, a team of oxen I haul with. They are very slow but

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\*Stockton Boyhood. Being the Reminiscences of Carl Ewald Grunsky. Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library; 1947.

\*\*Olin Cortis Majors

\*\*\*See also pp. 34-35.



Powers: they do a wonderful job." They were the tractors of our pioneer fathers. Now, as to the horses, he said, "I anticipate the horses might be stolen at any time." And in another letter he described how the early settlers caught some horse thieves and hung them on the spot, and all that sort of thing [laughs]. He said, "Now, as to the oxen, I just allow them to graze loose, and I will go to sleep maybe under a tree, and the next morning they are just browsing nearby."

He subsequently married my grandmother, Lilian Sweasey. She came across the plains with William Sweasey, who was her father. He organized and led a wagon train from New Harmony, Indiana. He developed Eureka, and he owned sailing vessels that came from Eureka to San Francisco. He was quite a person. And there was a brother, Tom Sweasey. They also had a stage line; they ran that too.

They had a ranch at Woodside and that's where my grandfather Powers met Miss Lilian Sweasey, and they were married. The Sweaseys had a large family. I think there were nine children altogether. Anyway, there was a big lawsuit over the land titles. It was one of those Mexican land title deals, and the whole dispute went to court, and unfortunately or otherwise they lost.

Many families in the Woodside district, south of San Francisco, lost out, because they all had a common title because of the Mexican land grants, which were usually on large acreages.

This was in the early '50s, I think, when this was announced. They [the William Sweasey family] just packed up all their belongings and organized a second wagon train and went north to Eureka, and helped settle that area. It was the first wagon train that ever came into Eureka. It was over a very rugged terrain, you know, going north by the coast route, across the Eel River which was very precipitous and dangerous. It was a very difficult undertaking because all of that country was so very rugged and so many streams had to be crossed.

At first he was in the dairy and timber business and very active. Later he organized his own steamship line which went to San Francisco. He was a representative in the state legislature. He was also elected as delegate to the state



Powers: constitutional convention, where he took a very active part.\*

The Powers family sold out near Redwood City. They next had a farm in Calaveras County, and my grandfather's brother Lucius then went into the liquor business there. Grandfather, Aaron Hubbard Powers, went into the general grocery business, and that's where the family lived for a good portion of the time when the children were young and the family coming of age. Later my Aunt Kate [Martha Kate Powers] married Mr. Ewald Grunsky, who was the first graduate of the Stockton High School--as it is all set up there in Cousin Clotilde's book. He and his brother, having finished high school, took a steamer and went across the Isthmus and back to Germany and to college at Stuttgart, and he graduated with honors there as a civil engineer. And in his duties as state engineer he mapped all of the streams flowing into the San Joaquin and Kings rivers and many other streams in California. He prepared some very excellent field notes as to what water rights landowners had and how much water each of them took for the irrigation of their respective lands.

In all of this study he saw some real good property that he liked so well on the Kings River at Centerville, near Fresno, so he bought it. This was about 1880. He held it several years and then sold it to the family. Of course they had always told him if he saw some good property to let them know, which he did, so that was the way the Aaron Fowers family came to move to the Kings River at Centerville in 1885. We have owned this property ever since.

#### THE POWERS RANCH

Powers: The property had several water rights from several streams.

Teiser: How large a parcel is it?

Powers: Over 450 acres. It was excellent land. There were some of

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\*According to the 1909 California Blue Book or State Roster, William J. Sweasey was elected to the fifth session of the California State legislature from San Francisco, and in 1878-1879 was a member of the second state constitutional convention.



Powers: the first oranges and persimmons in the U.S.A. on the property when they bought it. It was one of the three persimmon plantings made by the federal government in California about 1875. They had one planting in Orange County, near Santa Ana, and ours and another at Cottonwood near Mount Shasta. The Department of Agriculture wanted to know how persimmons would grow and do in America. And they had some 60-odd different varieties on each ten-acre plot.

Teiser: Any left there now?

Powers: The last of the original 1875 trees were just pulled out last year. They usually have a life-span of 40 or 50 years.

Teiser: Have you planted more?

Powers: Oh yes, we have 26 acres. We are noted for persimmons. I've done quite a little work with persimmons. I believe the frozen persimmon puree has great possibilities. The persimmon is one of the most wonderful fruits that we grow. The American public doesn't know anything about them. The cultivated persimmon is oriental. Actually it started in China and migrated to Japan, and, oh, there may be as many as 100 different varieties of persimmons. They're an alkaline fruit and very high in enzymes which are a great aid to digestion. They are three or four times stronger than Alka-seltzer or any of these other so-called antacid palliatives. Most varieties of persimmon must first be allowed to become very soft before they are sweet and delicious to eat.

Teiser: Have you actually frozen the puree?

Powers: Oh yes, and I have some in storage. I've been experimenting with this and working with the University of California. Dr. M.A. Joslyn, who is a great wine man (I first met him in connection with the wine industry), is also a great expert on persimmons. The enzymes in the persimmon are what do the trick. There are two main varieties, the astringent and the non-astringent; and the astringent are the most common, and the non-astringent you can eat just like an apple. And on my trip to Europe in '66, I found that Italy, which I knew was already a very big producer of persimmons, that their type is all concentrated on that non-astringent type, and all the fancy restaurants carried them. It's a beautiful persimmon and you can eat it just like an apple.





Teiser: Do you also grow grapes on this property?

Powers: Oh yes, grapes have actually been our main crop, but the grape industry has been so sick--nothing but red ink and poor prices-- I pulled out a big portion of my grapes. I still have around 24 acres, which isn't much. It's just more or less to say that we're still vineyardists.

Teiser: When was that that you pulled them out?

Powers: Let's see, six years ago, 1963. After the set-aside. The growers voted that out.\*

Teiser: Your father was interested in grape growing?

Powers: Yes. As a matter of fact, though, he got-- See, we had these orange trees on our ranch. We had three varieties there. We had what's known as the sweet orange--Mediterranean sweet--it belongs to the Valencia side of the family. It has many seeds, came in from Florida. All the early settlers would carry these Mediterranean sweet seeds just like Johany Appleseed in their vest pockets. As you go through the Mother Lode country, you'll find orange trees, and they'll be Mediterranean sweet, growing by a creek. And if you look around, you'll probably find an old chimney, and there had been a home.

Teiser: Angel's Camp has a lot of them.

Powers: That's right. Well, again, this is Mediterranean sweet; we had about three acres on this original planting. There's about seven or eight orange groves that were planted in the early '50s there in that Centerville area.

The most popular orange variety is the navel orange. In the experimental persimmon plot of 1875, every other tree was a navel orange.

Teiser: Were there grapes when you came there too?

Powers: My father had those. Principally Muscat variety, which was planted for raisins. This was just before the Thompson Seedless variety was coming into popularity because it was seedless.

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\*For further discussion of the set-aside, see pp. 27 and 47.



Teiser: Were there grapes on the property when your family bought it?

Powers: Yes. About 120 acres of Muscat grapes. Later father planted 20 acres of Feher Szagos and some 40 acres of Emperor table grapes.

My grandfather was very active in the early days of Sun Maid Raisin Association, when it was led by [M.] Theodore Kearney, an Englishman who was a great pioneer. He planted Kearney Park. Later he donated it to the University. He planned this as a site for a branch of the University. And of course, they're kicking themselves today that they didn't develop it.\* But you know hindsight oftentimes--

Our ranch was 15 miles from Fresno. In those early days everything had to be hauled by wagon. Of course the power was horses and mules. It took 60 head to run our ranch there in those early days. And of course they also had a large dairy.

My father was quite ingenious. As I say, we had one of the original orange groves. In that orange grove were grapefruit with a lot of seeds, and grapefruit seeds were used to root stock; you would graft lemons and navel oranges on them. So he got into the citrus nursery business, and he planted over 100 acres of citrus nursery [stock]. And it was rather ingenious the way he handled it. He'd lease the land, two to five acres, to Japanese, and they would build a little house and live right on it there, on the property. And father would loan them money to buy seed, and let them have their rent and one thing and another. And then when, in the second year, the trees were ready to be sold, my father would sell them for them. A hundred acres of orange trees will produce--well, it's unbelievable--anywhere from 7,000 to 14,000 trees to the acre.

We also had walnuts, figs, apples, pomegranates and everything else on the property. He believed in diversification.

Teiser: What kind of grapes did he plant?

Powers: Thompson Seedless, Alicante, Malaga; and then also Feher Szagos and Emperors, as I say.

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\*It was sold.



Teiser: Did any go into wine?

Powers: Yes, Muscats and Alicante and Feher Szagos were popular wine varieties which went to the winery.

Teiser: Did he make any wine himself?

Powers: No, father did not. With the orange deal he moved into fruit shipping. From 1910 to 1932 he was one of the biggest fresh grape packers in the Sanger district and could move about 500 carloads a year. He had three packing sheds all within a radius of five miles.

He was very active working with Donald Conn as a grape shipper. Now those were carload shipments that went on the fruit auctions in all the big cities in the East, New York, Boston, Chicago and Pittsburgh

Most of his citrus nursery stock was shipped to Southern California, and some went to Tulare County. He played an important part in developing the citrus industry of Southern California. Because with that many trees, he was like a manufacturer. He would sell them to the big nurseries in Southern California, and they, in turn, would sell to the growers.

This brought him into both the fruit shipping business and banking, and so he had two banks in Sanger and then came to Fresno, and he was manager of the Growers' Bank here and helped put that bank on its feet.

Teiser: He was a versatile man.

Powers: Yes, he was a hard worker. And he just loved to work and was very successful.

He had several thousand acres of grapes, in the Sanger-Clotho, Dinuba and Strathmore districts. In addition to this, he bought other properties.

When I graduated from Boalt Hall, after taking the bar examinations in September and October 1927, I went East and spent two months covering all the big fruit auctions, watching the sales of fresh grapes and tree fruits.





Powers Packing Sheds





Teiser: Was this during Prohibition?

Powers: This was all during Prohibition. That's right. Wine grapes were sold in Kearny in New Jersey at the freight yards there across the Hudson River from New York. But the table grapes would be unloaded from the car and put on a lighter or a barge and taken to piers #23, #24 and certain other designated piers in New York City, where they were displayed, catalogued and sold in different auctions. Of course, this was the biggest fruit sale center in America. It had four auctions. And that's the way the grapes were sold. The buyers would go down and they'd have the catalogue and they'd first inspect the fruit displayed on the piers, and then they'd go back and bid on the fruit which they wanted.

Teiser: They bought by the carload?

Powers: Yes, by carloads. Many times a car would then be closed and trans-shipped to Boston or to other cities. It all depended on what the market demand would be.

Teiser: We've been told that some of the wine grapes were crushed right at the yards.

Powers: Well, that could have been. That could have been. They also had a small freight yard in New York City just outside the central part. But of course they had these same sales of wine grapes in Pittsburgh, which was quite a center, and Chicago and Detroit, Boston, and Philadelphia.

Teiser: Were you aware of any amount of those grapes going into organized crime groups' hands?

Powers: Not intentionally, no. If it was, it wasn't anything that anyone knew anything about.

Teiser: So far as you knew, they were going to people who were going to make their legal allotment?

Powers: Well, we knew this, that a lot of those grapes were being crushed and sold, and we presumed it was in a legal manner because we had no knowledge otherwise.

Teiser: This was at a time when there was a very good market-- which then fell off, didn't it?



Powers: Well, the market didn't fall off, we just overproduced. And this is typical of what goes on--I won't just say in the grape industry, but all through every phase of our agriculture, where, as I pointed out to you yesterday, I don't care whether its almonds or oranges or what, as soon as you make it profitable, why, before you know it, the industry is just overloaded.

Teiser: What varieties were you shipping as wine grapes during Prohibition?

Powers: Well, Alicante was one of the very important ones. It's a red grape and it makes a red wine. And of course the Muscat, also, was another very important grape. And then of course we had all the other varieties, Barbera, and Zinfandel. Zinfandel was another very popular grape.

Teiser: Did they all ship well?

Powers: Oh, yes. And Zinfandel is a tight bunch, very like a cluster, always, and of course, as I say, they ship well. And the Alicantes ship well. Then Muscats, and then also some Malagas; that's a wine grape for a white wine. And of course they had some of the wine grapes like the Golden Chasselas and Burgers. And then, of course, some of the very fine Chardonnay and all--but those we never knew anything about.

The old vineyards that had, you know, excellent plantings, more or less turned out sacramental wines before Repeal. There was a very big business in sacramental wines for the Jewish and the Catholic churches, especially.

Teiser: Were there people in this area producing for those...?

Powers: No, that was done further north, all around the Napa and Sonoma country, and one vineyard or two around Livermore. And there was one in Mission San Jose. As I say, these few carried on. There was one plant in Madera where Mr. [K.] Arakelian made some sacramental wine too.

And then Andrew Mattei had one of the largest wine and brandy plants in our area. He was a winemaker and a very close friend, and he was part of our group in our co-op that organized the Central Valley [Cooperative Winery, Inc.].



Teiser: Where did he make his wines?

Powers: Well, they had their own big plant about six or seven miles southeast of Fresno. And this office building, the Mattei Building, was one of the very finest buildings in Fresno. It had its own electrical system, its own water system, and everything needed. You should have seen my office. It was up on the 11th floor for over 20 years. And of course, we loved it. It was all finished in Philippine mahogany.

#### THE CALIFORNIA VINEYARDISTS ASSOCIATION

Teiser: How did your father happen to get interested in the California Vineyardists Association?

Powers: Well, father believed in seeing the grape industry organized. It was the only way we could do things successfully. Everyone in the industry had to work together and unite to be successful.

Teiser: Did Mr. Donald D. Conn then come to him?

Powers: Yes. Mr. Conn called this group, and father, together. And father was very much sold on Mr. Conn. We all liked him. He had a very nice personality.

Teiser: What was he like?

Powers: He was a big man, big man with a fine personality, and he had a lot of public relations experience, and of course this was what was required in getting people together, because it's awful easy for people to become divided. It takes a real personality to bring people together, don't you know.

Teiser: Some people said that his attempts to organize were immediately directed by Mr. Hoover.\* Were you aware of any such connection?

Powers: No, I never had any knowledge of such a rumor. Of course, we saw Mr. Hoover and all.

Teiser: How did you happen to see him?

Powers: You see, Mr. Hoover was concerned about the farm program, and we've had farm problems from time immemorial, and Mr. Hoover himself owned several large properties 2,000 to 3,000 acres.

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\*Herbert Clark Hoover



Powers: He had a large holding down in the Kern district, the Bakersfield area around Delano, somewhere there near the Di Giorgio properties, and then had another large holding at Minturn, which is just north of the town of Chowchilla. And his son, Allan Hoover I believe it was, farmed in Madera County. The Hoover Farms. And of course we appreciated seeing him give us some leadership.

Teiser: And this was all during the '20's?

Powers: Yes, but in the late '20's.

Teiser: During the time the California Vineyardists Association was organizing?

Powers: That's right. And it was organized to help stabilize the program of selling and handling and distributing our products.

Teiser: Did it succeed?

Powers: It was rather successful at first, but time caught up with us, and as I say, we had some very good years, and then things began to drift apart. Can't say just what broke it up at this point; I wasn't active. I was pretty young at that time.

Teiser: I've been told that Fruit Industries Inc. developed from the organization. Does that sound familiar to you?

Powers: That's right. They took over some of the functions and expanded. That was another phase of it, and that was the property ownership. In other words, growers and shippers would work with Mr. Conn as part of the organization, and then out of that certain segments bought and owned their own properties, and out of that came the wine group that developed.

Teiser: Fruit Industries?

Powers: Fruit Industries, yes.

Teiser: Do you know Walter Taylor?

Powers: Oh yes.

Teiser: He was active both in the California Vineyardists and then in the Fruit Industries, was he not?





Powers: That's right. And then of course that very beloved person, Mr. [Almond R.] Morrow. Everybody loved him. And a wonderful leader, very fine person, from the standpoint of working with the industry and giving considered outstanding advice and leadership.

Teiser: But they went their way, the Fruit Industries people, and you went yours?

Powers: They were primarily interested in wine.

Teiser: And you were still grape people?

Powers: Table grapes, yes.

Teiser: And some wine grapes?

Powers: And some wine grapes, that's right.

Teiser: So it was not really until Repeal that your family interests turned to wine?

Powers: That's right. That's when we started.

Teiser: You told yesterday--and would you again today for the tape--about your father's association with the Traungs?

Powers: Yes, Louis Traung and Charlie Traung.

Teiser: You remember them yourself?

Powers: Oh, very definitely. Yes, I came to know them quite well because they were very generous and invited me to their duck club in the 1920's when I was in college, and so once or twice a year, I enjoyed shooting ducks with them, and you know, got quite well acquainted with them. And they were just outstanding people.

Father had purchased a half section of land, and he developed and planted it as vineyard. This was around 1918 near Sanger, on Belmont Avenue. This turned into a very profitable project because grapes in World War I were very profitable. Also had some peaches that they planted. But anyway, then, after World War I, conditions continued to get worse and worse and they wanted to sell the property, and anyway they still carried it on and even lost money with it,



- Powers: but then along came Repeal and they [the Traungs] were very much interested and saw a great future in the wine industry and very glad to join with my father, buying a half interest in the Belmont property.
- Teiser: How did your father happen to know the Traung brothers? They were San Francisco label suppliers, lithographers.
- Powers: Yes, but you see, they had come down to Fresno to sell the fruit shippers.
- Teiser: Oh, box labels.
- Powers: Labels for boxes, that's right. And then he, Charlie Traung, was an Elk and a Mason, and they became very close friends. Father was one of their big customers in those days.
- Teiser: What brands did he ship under?
- Powers: Mt. Tivy was his main label.

#### MT. TIVY\* WINERY

- Powers: That was the reason we used the same label for the new winery, you see.

In the spring of 1933, my father asked me to look into a winery. And I found this plant over near Parlier, just between Parlier and Reedley, on the S.P. and Santa Fe. Both lines crossed right there at the property, where they had over 3,600 feet of trackage on the two railroads. And we bought it for virtually nothing. In the early days, the Samuels owned the property. They were living in San Francisco. The property had been standing still, so to speak. I liked its location, and it was a very natural winery site.

- Teiser: You said "Mt. Tivy" was named after a mountain?
- Powers: It's right where the Kings River emerges from the mountains. And then there's a little valley right next to it called Tivy Valley. Father always enjoyed it.
- Teiser: In 1933 I would have thought there would have been much competition for purchase of winery properties.

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\*Sometimes spelled Mount Tivy



- Powers: Well, it takes people a while to shake the dust off and look around. It all sounds very simple, but to go into a business that is absolutely foreign to you. And then, you see, there were about two generations of people that came and went during Prohibition. Let's see, when did Prohibition come?
- Teiser: 1918.
- Powers: 1918. There was a period there, 15 years. It seemed longer than that to me [laughs], but 1918 to 1933, a period of 15 years...
- Teiser: Was there much bootlegging around here of wine?
- Powers: No. Very little. You see, the problem of bootlegging with wine is difficult, because it's so much easier to bootleg alcohol, which is a very small package, compared. But if you had to get a wine barrel out, immediately it's quite obvious. Whereas alcohol is the main thing, and bathtub gin was the main thing that was distributed. Of course, we knew that anybody could get a permit to make 200 gallons of wine legally, so we had a presumption that that was...in your big cities something that had been worked out and didn't bother to look into what was going on. But of course as you look back on the record now, this man Al Capone was one of the richest men in the United States. This I never knew. I only learned this a couple of months ago.
- Teiser: I have been told that there were people in California involved with him.
- Powers: Oh there would be, no doubt. I mean, the extent of his operation was just fantastic.
- Teiser: In any case, when commercial wine making became legal again, you bought a winery.
- Powers: Yes, as I say, I bought it from the Paul Samuel estate, and the widow was still living in San Francisco and she was so happy to sell it. And I couldn't believe we were getting all this trackage and 40 acres of land. It was laid out, as I say, in an excellent area because it's right in the center of the entire grape industry and of course, you see, in those early days they didn't know what trucks were. Everything had to go by horse and wagon. Well, a horse and wagon--how far are you going to haul grapes with a horse and wagon? And if



Powers: they had to go 20 miles or so, they were loaded on a freight car. So therefore the railroad trackage in the early days was a must.

Teiser: Was there any equipment in the winery?

Powers: No. There was a boiler there and a chimney, and everything else had been taken. You know how people will take things.

Teiser: What was the history of the winery as you know it?

Powers: Well, the Samuels were essentially a brandy producer. They did a tremendous business in brandy. It was called the Samuels Winery. Sanford Samuel was in the liquor business in New York City and we sold him a quarter of a million gallons of brandy in the first year. And of course, this started us off with a bang, and so we had basically a big brandy operation right from the beginning.

Teiser: Was Paul Samuel the earlier owner and Sanford Samuel his son?

Powers: Yes.

Interesting, I looked up, tried to find some old files, and I found an agreement between Mt. Tivy and my mother. My mother wanted to get out of the wine business. We had to borrow as much as a half million dollars, you know, for our annual grape crush. Well, she hadn't been accustomed to anything like this, and father had always handled the banking, so she was unacquainted with this altogether. Of course with father, this was old shoe. He would borrow money from the banks and loan it out to good people and make 2 per cent or 3 per cent profit, you know.

Teiser: So she sold soon after your father's death?

Powers: Yes.

We started the winery up in August of '33. And you mentioned the stills. The old Parlier winery, which was just two miles away, had stills. So we bought their stills, and we had to add a lot more equipment to them. They were excellent stills.

Teiser: Who had owned the Parlier winery?





From California Wine and Spirits Review  
December 1933

**Death Note:**

**Lucius Powers, Sr.**

Lucius Powers, Sr., 61, head of the Mt. Tivy Winery at Lacjac, Fresno County, and a pioneer San Joaquin Valley vineyardist and fruit packer, died in a Fresno sanitarium December 4th a few hours after he was injured in an automobile collision.

Powers, the father of **Assemblyman Lucius Powers, Jr.**, of Fresno, settled with his father, the late Aaron Hubbard Powers, at Centerville, Fresno County, when he was 15 years old, and with his father extended the family holdings to several hundred acres of vineyard and orchard land. For years he has been a dominant figure in the valley fruit industry.

With probable repeal, Powers acquired the Mt. Tivy Winery and began production on a large scale. The winery operates one of the largest plants for fortification brandy in the valley district. Lucius Powers, Jr., is manager. Another son, **Aaron Powers**, manages the vineyard and orchard property. Powers also headed the **Powers Fruit Company**, fruit shippers. He also was prominent in banking and financial circles and took a leading part in civic affairs.

In addition to his sons, his widow and two daughters, Mary Louise Powers of Fresno and Martha Kate Harrington of Strathmore, survive.

His father, the late Aaron Hubbard Powers, came to California by way of Cape Horn in 1849 and after mining and business ventures in Northern California came to Fresno County in 1887 to establish the original Powers ranch near Centerville, Fresno County.



Powers: Well, Mr. William Parlier (The town of Parlier was named after him; built Parlier, and a very wonderful person.) and Mr. William J. Lohman, who was another very fine person. He was a banker in Parlier. They owned the Parlier bank. They were the surviving directors, officers, of the old Parlier Winery. So we bought the stills from them just as they sat for \$10,000. And then we had Krenz, Oscar Krenz, of San Francisco, completely rebuild the stills. We wanted the very best.

One thing that we demanded was quality, and this was what we started out with. We were going to make the best wine and the best brandy. Nobody was going to make anything any better. And I hired the very best men I could find. I was very fortunate in getting Mr. Carlo Cetti as our winemaker. He had been with Italian Swiss Colony at Asti for many many years. This was during the pre-Prohibition era we call the "old days." I've learned things here in this article\* I didn't even know about him [Cetti]. I knew he was one of the very best, and of course his production was the best. We learned to appreciate it later because I was able to get as much as 5¢ to 10¢ a gallon more for our wines than the trade because of our quality. When we started out we had prices of 80¢, and then this market went down to where 60¢ was hard to get. And a lot of people had to sell at 50-55¢ because their quality wasn't there. But you can understand dealing in a wine or brandy product, you have got to be reliable so they can count on it, that's all.

But anyway, this agreement here related to the contract I made with Lohman and Parlier, to buy the equipment. Of course I had also Mr. Cetti at my elbow; I took him on over there because, you see, we had to have the scales and all the other necessary equipment to do a high quality job.

Teiser: Where did you get your cooperage?

Powers: That all came in from San Francisco, and we bought all new cooperage because cooperage deteriorates. Again in order not to fool around with anything second-rate, we went ahead and got the best. And then, as I say, the second year we expanded

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\*"Parlier Vintner is Growing New Grape Varieties," Fresno Bee, September 9, 1934.





Left to right: Lucius Powers, Jr., Carlo Cetti, Lucius Powers, Sr.



Lucius Powers, Sr.  
President, Growers National Bank  
Fresno, California



From Fresno Bee, September 9, 1934

# PARLIER VINTNER IS GROWING NEW GRAPE VARIETIES

BY M. J. KEYES  
(Country Life Editor)

The variety and the quality of wines that can be made in the San Joaquin Valley have by no means reached their limit, according to Carlo Cetti, veteran valley vintner, who is now the superintendent of the Mt. Tivey Winery at Las Jac near Parlier.

Last year Cetti, obtained his plants at Healdsburg, set twelve acres near the winery to the Golden Shasla variety of vine, which produces a grape for the manufacture of a dry wine.

"The idea that dry wines can not be produced in the San Joaquin Valley is preposterous," says Cetti. "All that is required is the proper equipment and careful attention to the exigencies of climate. I have made excellent dry wines in this valley and plan to do so again."

## Studies Foreign Vines

Cetti also has small plantings of the Chianti, Pinonero, Moscato, Capelli, Sargnon, Barbera and Grignolino varieties of black grapes, with which he plans to experiment when they start bearing.

The Mt. Tivey superintendent and wine maker obtained his education in his chosen calling in the University of Milan, Italy. He was active in his profession for several years after coming to America at the Swiss-Italian Colony in Asti, Sonoma County.

In 1907 he came to the San Joaquin Valley and built the Las Palmas Winery near Fresno and was engaged in the wine making industry until prohibition, when he went into the grocery business in Fresno. With the repeal of prohibition he became connected with the Mt. Tivey Winery Corporation, of which Lucius Powers, Jr., of Fresno is the president, and superintended the remodeling of the old plant, having had experience along that line before coming to America, his father having been an architect in Milan.

## Uses Modern Methods

Cetti is a firm believer in the use of modern methods in the manufacture of wine. He says the employment of refrigeration for the purpose of clarifying and stabilizing new wine is no new idea and that it has been in use in Italy and other European countries for more than thirty years. The chief result of refrigeration, he says, is that the wine does not cloud up or color in transit or because of violent changes in temperature or altitude.

Pasteurization, also, he says, has been resorted to in Italy since 1882. This process, he points out, also has a clarifying effect and removes substances that would continue to cause undesirable changes in the wine. The filtration process, which is the last to which the Mt. Tivey wine is subjected, according to Cetti, has a final clarifying and stabilizing effect on the product.

The Mt. Tivey Winery produced close to 1,000,000 gallons of wine last season and is planning to increase that figure this year, having started the crushing season early in the week, with a force of thirty-five workers employed at the plant and scores of others engaged in picking and hauling grapes from the corporation's 230-acre vineyard nearby and from other neighboring vineyards.

Plans are now afoot, Cetti revealed, to build an addition to the winery with a capacity of 1,000,000 more gallons.

## Two Stills Operated

Two stills will be operated this season for the manufacture of commercial brandy, each still having a capacity of 4,000 proof gallons daily. Last year the plant produced 3,000 barrels of brandy.

Both the Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroads have spur tracks at the plant, one tract on each side of the main building.

Recently the corporation finished the construction of a new sherry

cooking house, with a capacity of 110,000 gallons of wine.

Cetti points with pride to an invention of his own at the Mt. Tivey plant, a motor-driven machine for loading barrels on freight cars, which eliminates the back-breaking manual labor attached to that operation.

He also calls the attention of the visitor to the system through which the pomace, or residue of the crushed grapes, is salvaged and mixed with five per cent lime to make a fertilizer which he declares to be as effective by the ton as three tons of ordinary barnyard manure.

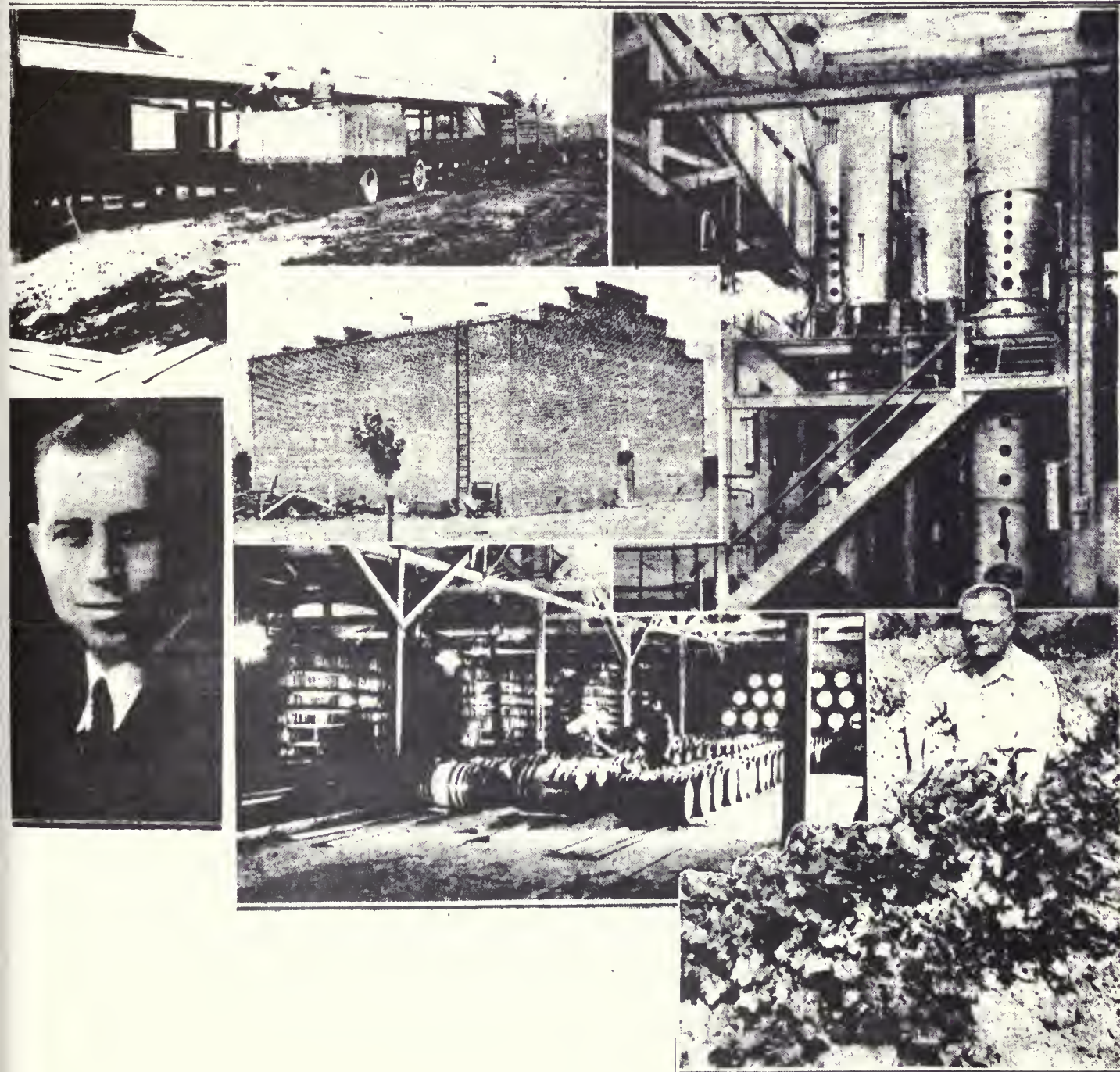




From Fresno Bee, "California Country Life"  
September 9, 1934

## VALLEY GRAPES FILLING GIANT WINERY VATS

Once again a considerable part of the San Joaquin Valley's huge grape crop is finding its way to the valley wineries. Crushing was in full swing in practically all the wineries in the valley during the week, including the Mt. Tivey Winery near Parlier. The pictures, taken at the Mt. Tivey Winery by Lew Hegg, The Bee staff cameraman, show: The barreling department, with A. Paselli (left) and A. DiQuirico; the two giant brandy stills, which have a capacity of 8,000 proof gallons a day; workmen unloading grapes from truck onto crusher conveyor; Carlo Cetti, the superintendent of the winery, showing some of his Golden Shasta vines, which he intends to experiment with in the manufacture of white dry wines; the new cherry cooking house, which has a capacity of 110,000 gallons, and Lucius Powers, Jr., of Fresno, the president of the Mt. Tivey Winery Corporation.





Powers: some more because we really had a fine operation going. We were always in the black and always making money. And this is something the other folks couldn't speak for. To me, there's just no short-cut. I mean, everybody wants quality, and when you go to buy something, you want something good.

Our production was in two parts. It was our sweet wines and sherries--that's port and muscat, and of course angelica, and then we used to make a blend we'd call a tokay. And then our commercial brandy. And we made good muscat brandy--and then there are two varieties, the neutral grape brandy and the muscat brandy, and of course in grape brandy, you can't use any muscat because muscat has such a strong flavor all of its own. On the other hand, in the early days, muscat brandy was one of the favorite of all brandies, and we did quite a little business with muscat brandy, and I personally like it. It has a character, but it's got to be old. In other words, a minimum of five years. Because again, the muscat is so strong, unless it's ameliorated by aging, it detracts from it.

Teiser: There's a mention in this 1934 article that Mr. Cetti said that dry wines could be made in this area, and he was planting some Golden Chasselas, which I guess could be used for either dry or sweet wines, couldn't they?

Powers: Yes, that's right. They make a good table wine, by picking them before they get too sweet, when they're about 19 sugar. And of course it will go up to 25, 26 degrees alcohol, but it's not as palatable then. On the other hand, if you want to make a sherry out of them, that is all right.

Teiser: Did you make table wines?

Powers: We made some, but not too much in the beginning.

Teiser: Why not?

Powers: Well, it requires a lot of refrigeration and a lot of other processes. You've got to have cellars that are cool. You see, we had our hands full. And we didn't want to make anything that wasn't tops, and that again is another reason we didn't go into the table wines. As I say, we had all we could do to keep up with our demand for our sweet wines. And we more or less allowed the people up north--you see, as you've been up there, they have caves and hillsides. Of course Northern California is an entirely different climate. Our





Powers: weather gets so hot here. And until we had better refrigeration and insulation we were just asking for trouble with table wines.

Teiser: Did you do any wine bottling at Mt. Tivy Winery?

Powers: Not at first. But we did with our brandy. Mr. Cetti's brandy was in great demand because of excellent quality, and it was a real pleasure to sell it. And we bottled that under the Royal Banquet label. And frankly it could have been the biggest business of all because there was no limit to where good brandy goes because many people learned to enjoy it. Again, you've got different kinds of brandy. There were brandies that weren't worth pouring out into the sink, they were so distasteful. But where you have something that's really lovely and pure, with a lovely flavor--and after the second year, brandy gets rather smooth and enjoyable. Many places have to use special water and all, but there at Mt. Tivy we could use the water right out of our wells. You see, your brandy comes off of the still about 170 proof and then you add water and caramel coloring. Most of our brandy was cut then to around 100 proof.

We didn't store the brandy there 'til later. Later they enlarged our plant and had, as you know, storage warehouses for the brandy like Christian Brothers have now.\* But we first brought it in barrels into the warehouses here in Fresno and stored it. That was one of the places, and some were stored in other towns, always on rail sites and then they could be reloaded you see. Because most of our brandies would go to the east coast, the biggest percentage of the production. We would sell brandy ahead. I sold a half million gallons to a big drug chain, McKesson-Robbins, which is an international group, and the same thing on wines. They came and bought, about a half million gallons of wine they liked very much, and they wanted it aged and we held it for them. I made a trip east in 1935 to help them on their labelling and bottling arrangements.

Teiser: Did they use their own labels?

Powers: Oh yes, they had their own labels, you see.

Teiser: What were your wine labels?

Powers: Well, as I recall, primarily Mt. Tivy. As I say, we did very little bottling as such, because this runs into an entirely different operation.

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\*Christian Brothers bought the Mt. Tivy winery in 1945.



From California Grape Grower, December 1934

## Royal Banquet BRANDY



ROYAL BANQUET BRANDY is guaranteed by us to have been made only from a fully fermented Muscatel Grape Wine; to have been distilled in the fall of 1933, properly aged in wood and is being bottled now as it is being sold; contains no artificial flavoring and it is . . . A SURE REPEATER; CONSUMER TESTS PROVE THIS.

Order Thru Your Jobber

**MOUNT TIVY WINERY, INC.**

San Francisco: 558 Sacramento St.

Los Angeles: 802 Hollywood Storage Bldg.





From Sacramento Bee, September 1, 1934

*Sac Bee 9-1-34*  
**Mount Tivey Adds  
 500,000 Gallons**

The storage capacity at the Mount Tivey Winery, established as the old Sanford Winery in 1901 and located at the intersection of the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroad lines at Parlier and Reedley Avenues near Fresno, is being increased this season from 1,000,000 gallons to 1,500,000 gallons to care for the greater production of sweet wines and brandy. Work is progressing rapidly on the construction of the additional tanks.

**340,000 Gallons Form Output.**

At present the cooperage comprises thirty-six tanks, ranging in size from 3,000 to 42,000 gallons. There are eighteen fermenting tanks of 12,000 gallons each. The 1933 production of the Mount Tivey Winery totaled 740,000 gallons of wine and 200,000 gallons of commercial fresh grape brandy.

Two modern stills, with a daily capacity of 7,000 gallons, distill the high grade brandies for which Mount Tivey is famed. A recently installed up-to-date refrigeration plant treats 7,500 gallons of wine every twenty-four hours, while a modern sherry cooker treats 110,000 gallons of sherry at a time. The grape crusher handles 400 tons of grapes per day.

**Vineyard Is Operated.**

The Mount Tivey Winery, situated in the heart of the muscat raisin belt, operates 1,200 acres of choice vineyards, producing wine, table and raisin grapes, and a number of orchards. The Mount Tivey brand of packed fruits has been favorably known for more than thirty years. Its 3,600-foot loading platform on a spur track can handle seventy cars at a time. All equipment is new and modern.

**Powers Is President.**

Luolus Powers, Jr., is president of the Mount Tivey Winery, while Charles Traung is vice president and Louis Strong is manager. Some years after the Sanford Winery was established, it was acquired by the Lackman and Jacoby interests, and became known as the Lac-Jac Winery. Later the California Wine Association controlled it. Powers and his associates took over the winery in September, 1933, and made many improvements.

The featured wine brands are the Mount Tivey and Royal Banquet, while the commercial brandy is marketed under the Two Stripes name. Large quantities of brandy are produced for the fortification of the wines.



Teiser: Did you continue then producing in full scale until you sold your interest?

Powers: Yes. My mother, as I say, wanted to sell out. It bothered her to borrow half a million dollars annually. And, as I say, even though she had a head for bargains, you know, [laughs] she just couldn't take it. In the meantime, we'd moved our office to San Francisco and I bought my home in St. Francis Woods there and raised my family and completely enjoyed San Francisco, and I dropped out of the wine industry. Went into the practice of law again, in San Francisco.

Teiser: Who was managing the winery then?

Powers: Well, there was Mr. Fred Vieth. He had come into the organization as a friend of the Traungs and he was an experienced accountant. Then there was Mr. Sam Riddell, who was my plant manager. He was of the old school here and had been in the industry prior to the Prohibition days. His son James L. Riddell has the Vie-Del plant now; he's a big operator, one of the leaders of the entire industry.

Teiser: They make grape concentrates, do they?

Powers: Concentrates and brandy and wines, too. And Mr. Riddell first started with us at our plant and subsequently went with Italian Swiss Colony and gained experience there, and then when they sold out he and Mr. Vieth formed Vie-Del. That's the way Vie-Del winery developed.

Teiser: So that's where that name came from!

I think an earlier name of your Mt. Tivy winery was--

Powers: Lac-Jac?

Teiser: Yes.

Powers: Well, there's some that called it Lac-Jac, because Lac Jac Avenue serves the winery. I think at one time it was known as the Lac-Jac winery.

Teiser: I believe that Lachman & Jacobi, the wine merchants, owned it?

Powers: Oh, yes. That was what that was from the early days. They were big wine merchants.



Teiser: After you went to San Francisco and ceased direct operation of Mt. Tivy, your mother then sold her interest?

Powers: Yes, she sold it to the Traungs in 1937.

Teiser: Did that end the Powers family association with it?

Powers: Yes.

Teiser: Had the Traungs been in it from the beginning?

Powers: Well, father first took title in his name because we had to put the whole thing together before we had something to talk to the Traungs about, you know. They came in, oh, I would say a couple of months after we acquired the Samuels property.

Teiser: And then they later acquired additional interest when your mother went out?

Powers: That's right. See, we owned a half interest, father did, with the Traungs. It was incorporated but basically, as I say, it was half and half.

Teiser: So the Traungs continued operating until the sale in 1943?

Powers: Yes. And that's when they sold to Seagram's.

Teiser: How did they decide to sell?

Powers: Well, I don't know. This is something I wasn't in on and have no knowledge about.

Teiser: Did you have any personal interest in it after your mother sold her interest?

Powers: No. No.

Teiser: And just the Traungs owned it then?

Powers: Yes. Well, there was someone else--can't recall this man's name, he's an old-timer... I think another thing that happened... Charlie Traung died in the meantime and Louie was the only one left of the Traung group.

Teiser: What were the years that you were living in San Francisco?

Powers: I guess I first went there in about 1935.



From Fresno Bee, February 5, 1943

## Seagrams Buys Mount Tivy Lac Jac Winery

Price Not Disclosed As  
Another Distillery Enters  
California Field

Entry of another major eastern distillery concern into the California wine industry was disclosed today with the filing of a document in the Fresno County recorder's office showing the Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc., concern has purchased the Mount Tivy Winery, Inc., property at Lac Jac in the Reedley district.

The transaction, pending for the past several weeks, was completed in New York and the consideration has not been disclosed. A certificate of fictitious name, signed by James E. Friel, vice president of the Seagram corporation, says the plant will continue operations as the Mount Tivy.

### Owned By Bay Men

Louis Traung is president of the Mount Tivy corporation. F. W. Vieth is vice president and general manager, H. H. Kattleman is secretary and A. C. McCrary treasurer. All are residents of San Francisco, headquarters of the Traung Investment Company.

Located 22 miles southwest of Fresno, the winery has storage capacity for 2,600,000 gallons of wine, 5,000 barrels of brandy, presses for 450 tons daily, and sherry tanks with 230,000 gallons capacity. Products include both sweet and dry wines.

### Operated Before Prohibition

Originally established as the Lac Jac Winery, the plant was operated for several years before prohibition. It was purchased in September, 1933, from the Paul Samuels Estate by the late Lucius Powers and associates and operations were resumed after completion of an extensive remodeling project.

Prior to prohibition, the winery was operated by the Lackman & Jacoby wine merchandising concern of San Francisco, producing about 500,000 gallons of wine and brandy annually. Lucius Powers, Jr., later was president of the Mount Tivy corporation and in reorganization programs the holdings were acquired by the Traung interests.

### Others Enter Field

Other recent California winery deals have included purchase by the Schenley Distilleries Corporation of the Roma plants in Fresno, Lodi, Healdsburg and Manteca, the Central Winery, Inc., holdings in Kingsburg and St. Helena, the Cresta Blanca Wine Company Livermore plant, and a part of the Colonial Grape Products Company holdings in the El Grove district. The National Distillers Products Corporation bought the Italian Swiss Colony wineries near Fresno and at Asti in the latter part of 1942, and a deal was completed last month in which the L. N. Renard & Sons, Inc., firm of New Jersey purchased the St. George Winery on Tulare Avenue near Fresno.





## RETURN TO FRESNO

Teiser: When did you come back to Fresno?

Powers: 1939. What had happened, my brothers and sisters were down here and we had a flood in '37-'38. Our whole ranch was under water. Consolidated Irrigation District had one of their big canals that was about 15 feet higher than our property and it followed along this ridge. Our land was all underlaid with cobbles and sand and wonderful drainage. This canal was originally laid on hardpan, but the water would take a rock and turn it and it would act as a hammer and just create big caverns in the handpan. And then just below this, the bottom was sand and cobbles. The irrigation district went in and broke up all these big caverns and hardpan, and they thought they were going to make a nice smooth channel, and when they did, they just had a porous bottom. And the water would just come out the sides like springs. This went on for two years, 1937 and 1938, and our ranch property was just under water for two years.

Teiser: This was the original family property?

Powers: Yes. And so my brother and sister, who were running the property, threw up their hands and said, "You come and take it. We don't want any part of it." Well. Mr. Christopher Bradley was my law associate. We filed this big lawsuit against the Consolidated Irrigation District and got a judgment in the lower court. Their geologist who was the head geologist at Stanford University told the irrigation directors, "You folks, every year that you have any high water are going to have lawsuits right back again in your lap. And P.W.A. are advancing money right now to line canals and you can get it done for about 50¢ on the dollar." And so they did, and as a result of that action, that canal is lined with concrete, and we now have a stable water table. And with all the water we had this year, for example, we were sitting high and dry.

Teiser: So you came back to take care of that. That was about the time the prorate was in effect. Did you have any winery interests at that time?

Powers: No. There was a prorate in '38, and I did a little buying of grapes and, oh I helped--I got into it because I had helped Mr. Parlier, who sold us our stills. He had some bad



Powers: frost damage and he couldn't sell his grape crop. So I bought his whole crop. I went to him and contracted for all of his tonnage. I paid Mt. Tivy for distilling the brandy, and Mr. Vieth was tickled to death to get the business, and then I subsequently sold the brandy for a nice profit. I offered him [Mr. Parlier] \$10 a ton, and he was thrilled to death. It helped save his neck. [Laughs] So I was doing this brandy contracting on the side. I'd buy the grapes and contract with a winery to do the distilling, and that's why I had some association with the California Wineries and Distilleries. That was actually owned by the Arthur Tarpey family. This was in 1937 and '38. I contracted with them and I furnished the barrels and the grapes, and all they did was the crushing and distilling, you see. Paul Tarpey's brother Arthur Tarpey had died. Paul was quite active in the Wine Institute.

It was known locally as the Tarpey Winery. It was one of the largest layouts here in this whole district. Their plant is still a big operation, now. National Distillers bought it and they sold it to Italian Swiss Colony, and Louis Petri. And Louis Petri has now sold it to Heublein. Now it works this way: Heublein came in and bought the plant. I think they wanted a big tax write-off. They made wine for Allied Grape Growers, which is all one big co-op. And of course this is where they made their brandy and sweet wines and later dry wines.

Teiser: Where is the Tarpey winery located?

Powers: It's about eight miles from Fresno.

Teiser: So you did a little work with that group on the prorate?

Powers: Yes.

#### POST-REPEAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LEGISLATION

Teiser: You spoke of the Sweet Wine Producers Association.

Powers: The Sweet Wine Producers Association was an industry group.

Teiser: When did that come into being?



- Powers: Organized in 1933. And we were a very strong organization. We sent Harry Barbour, our former congressman, to Washington. Arthur Tarpey was our first president, and then I was in the chain there, I forget just where. I was also attorney for the group. We organized, naturally, as a non-profit association. And it was to bring a uniform--instead of going out and cutting each other's throats, working together on a price that we could live with, and more or less trying to maintain a stable operation. And also we operated for the benefit of the grower as well because virtually all of us were growers. As I say, Mr. Arakelian was one of the big operators, and then Louis Martini down at Kingsburg, who subsequently sold out and moved up to St. Helena.
- Teiser: He was here for quite a few years, wasn't he?
- Powers: Kingsburg was where he first started. He had a big modern plant down at Kingsburg, and he sold out to Schenley\* and they expanded his plant some more, added considerable more gallonage to it.
- Teiser: Was he making sweet wines here?
- Powers: Oh yes. Because this was a sweet wine area. The main thing was to get people who would produce something good.
- Teiser: Was he making very good wines?
- Powers: Oh yes. He had a good reputation. But he was also active industry-wise. He was a very fine leader and I admired him very much.
- Teiser: Was Mr. A. Setrakian in your association?
- Powers: Yes.
- Teiser: Did he cooperate in sending Barbour east?
- Powers: Yes. That was unanimous. We sent Harry Barbour to Washington and paid all of his expenses, some seven or eight thousand dollars. He was a New Yorker originally, and he was our congressman who had been defeated for re-election. Mr. Barbour practiced law here with Judge Kellas--he was later a Superior Court judge--in Barbour and Kellas. I was in their office a few years later. He stood in very high esteem with both Democrats and Republicans. He was a Republican.

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\*Later owned by Schenley, the winery was sold by Louis M. Martini and his associates to Central California Wineries, Inc. in 1940. See Louis M. Martini, Wine Making in the Napa Valley, an interview in this series completed in 1973.



Powers:

This was the day when we were drafting the provisions of the Wine Control Act, and we were in Washington fighting to keep the whiskey people and the beer people out of our hair because in the old days, before Prohibition, the whiskey people and the beer people had a monopoly on everything. Both state and federal legislation. You couldn't operate unless they said yes. And you can understand: they owned bars, they owned wholesale liquor houses, they were it. So the wine industry was just little boys in short pants. We weren't about to see this situation happen again. And so, as I say, this all started in '33, and we were deeply indebted to Harry Barbour, because he knew his way around in Washington as he had handled the War Department appropriation bills for years as our congressman. Well, you had to be a top man in Congress to have that responsibility.

Of course, he was well acquainted with the Treasury Department, and again it's who you know that's very important. So we were right on the ground floor in drafting the Wine Control Act. We definitely wanted to have our own wine code, and this is what we now have.

You see, there was no Wine Institute at that time, I must remind you. People from the Bay Area came down to Fresno and wanted us to help them form a state-wide organization. We said no, we want to help and we will, but give us just another year to get on our feet because we are, you might call it, a new organization ourselves. We've got a great mixture of races and creeds and we would prefer to see our own organization successfully established before we start working on another. We're having a hard time keeping our group working together as a volunteer organization for the good of the industry. Arakelian, you know, was accustomed to working by himself; he was a very capable man, but he was more of a loner. We made him a vice president, and he had many good ideas. We wanted to have a substantial part of the industry with us. So we had [Antonio] Perelli-Minetti down in Delano, and as I say we had Louis Martini,\* and the Matteis and the Tarpeys, and Sam Harkleroad. He had been the manager of the Mattei winery and was a very outstanding man in our area. We had darned near 90 per cent of the industry.

Anyway, the boys around the Bay became very much admirers of our organizational activities and wanted us to come up and help them. So at the end of '33, or early '34, Louis Martini and all of us who were leaders of this group in Fresno went to San Francisco and we put together the Wine Institute. Everybody

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\*Louis M. Martini





Powers: was afraid of the boys who had a part of the old California Wine Association, like Mr. Morrow. Now our boys were afraid of them because the Wine Association in the early days were tough opposition, and they didn't want a repeat performance of that. So, anyway we met with them and we put this thing together, and of course, we all held important offices in the Institute.\* Mr. Morrow was the head of it. He was a real fine person. And Jeff Peyser was there. And we had Mr. Barbour again representing the Institute. And we got this Wine Control bill drafted on the basis that we wanted. There were many provisions relative to wine making--wine storage, tax payments, that sort of thing.

One of the important things--that you may think is funny, but over east, they made wine using cane sugar, and we wouldn't have any part of that because we thought it was so much better to have just straight pure wine.\*\* The eastern people had been so accustomed to taking sugar, adding it--this was in order to make sweet wines. But basically, though, and I could see this coming even in the early days, table wine was going to outdo the sweet wine industry some day. Because the peculiar thing--I noticed it even in my own family when Repeal first came--at first everybody liked the very sweet wines like muscatel and angelica. Well, it was no time at all before nobody would touch those wines and they were interested in a nice port or a sherry, something that wasn't so sweet, and the trend has continued to go that way on a large scale, and it's still going. Of course, your natural wines are so much better for you, from a digestive standpoint. So then I think it was '35 that President Roosevelt signed this Wine Control bill, and there was about seven or eight of us. I had to go east anyway, so I took my wife Geraldine and--oh yes, I was helping McKesson-Robbins with their bottling. Anyway, President Roosevelt had us come to the White House and he signed the bill in our presence. There was Lee Jones of Shewan-Jones, who had been very active as one of the leaders up in the Lodi district in the north. And Judge [Marion] De Vries, an ex-congressman who had been very active as a representative of the folks up north during all his time in Congress. And as I say, there were seven or eight of us who went to the White House.

Teiser: That must have been quite an event.\*\*\*

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\*For other accounts of the inception of the Wine Institute, see other interviews in this series.

\*\*See also p. 40.

\*\*\*See also pp. 37-40.





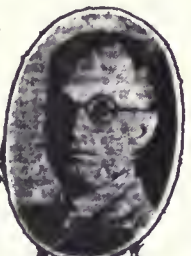
A. PERELLI-MINETTI, PRES.  
A. PERELLI-MINETTI & SONS  
DELANO

L.M. MARTINI, PRES.  
MARTINI WINERY  
KINGSBURG



LUCIUS POWERS, JR., PRES.  
MOUNT TIVEY WINERY  
FRESNO

DR. MYER ALGARTEN, PRES.  
GARDEN VINEYARDS WINERY  
FOWLER



HARRY DUVENNEY, PRES.  
P.C. CONST WINERY & DISTILLERY  
FRESNO



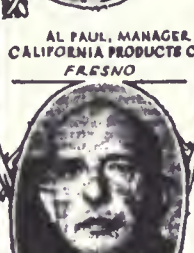
M. ALLEGRETTI, PRES.  
KEARNEY WINERY  
FRESNO



B. GRUBARI, PRES., SAN JOSE  
LAS PALMAS WINERY  
FRESNO



ARTHUR TARPEY, PRES.  
CALIF. WINERY & DISTILLERY  
FRESNO



AL PAUL, MANAGER  
CALIFORNIA PRODUCTS CO.  
FRESNO



COLEMAN CAINE, PRES.  
LUCERNE WINERY  
FRESNO



FRANK GIANNINI, PRES.  
TULARE WINERY  
TULARE

*San Joaquin*  
Valley Members  
of the  
Sweet Wine Producers  
Association  
of California



HUGO MALTER, PRES.  
ST. GEORGE WINERY  
FRESNO



E. PUSEY CAIN, PRES.  
HENRIETTA RANCHO  
PRODUCTS CO.  
FRESNO



K. ARAKELIAN, PRES.  
MADERA WINERY  
MADERA



M.D. NAMAN, PRES.  
SANTA LUCIA WINERY  
FRESNO



G. MASELLI, PRES.  
MASELLI WINERY  
FRESNO



SAM HARKLEROAD, TRUSTEE  
MATTEI WINERY  
FRESNO



A. SETRAKIAN, PRES.  
CALIF. GROWERS WINERIES  
FRESNO



SAMUEL CAPLAN, PRES.  
ALTA WINERY  
DINUBA



A. JOSEPH, PRES.  
ST. JOSEPH WINERY  
FRESNO





## THE SET-ASIDE AND INDUSTRY STABILIZATION

Teiser: You said before we started taping that the Gallo organization in itself has been a great--

Powers: Stabilizer.

Teiser: And strengthening factor?

Powers: Oh yes, very definitely. Ernest Gallo's been, what I call, most forward. And I admire him very much because he realizes, well, first that we've got to have a quality product. But he's a man that stays put, and he's not given to histrionics and all this sort of thing that our friend Setrakian is. For example, here Ernie had--this is talking out of school, but it'll just show you the type of person compared with Setrakian--Setrakian was presiding at our set-aside group of advisers. It was in September and because the set-aside had been voted and was in effect, nevertheless a lot of people did not make raisins because they didn't know how to look upon it. They figured the money was going to be made in going to the winery. But anyway, so Mr. Gallo came out with a \$35 price, which was \$10 or more than what the market had been paying.

But at this meeting Mr. Setrakian jumped on Ernie Gallo. Setrakian was also head of the raisin prorate group, which operated under a federal marketing order. And they didn't have a full crop--they didn't have the surplus, put it that way--that they previously had had. And as a result the surplus went into the wine picture. But we also kept it in balance with the set-aside. But I thought it was unnecessary on Setrakian's part to jump on Ernie Gallo. He said, well, if it hadn't have been for Mr. Gallo and some of these boys that offered \$35 just at the time when they were making raisins, why, we would have had plenty of raisins made this year. Well, Ernie never forgot that because it didn't show any love on Setrakian's part for someone who had helped him put this thing over. So Ernie had his chance a year or two later and he took him on. That was one of the reasons the thing was voted out. But again, as I say, I blame Setrakian for not being big enough to try to understand and work together as an industry, don't you know.\*

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\*See also p. 47.



- Teiser: I suppose you always are going to have loners.
- Powers: Oh, yes. That's par for the course.
- Teiser: However, it seems to me that on the whole, the California wine industry has--
- Powers: They have worked together. And that's one reason I feel the Institute-- Or you take our local organization. It still exists, but it isn't the organization it was because the Institute is covering the field.
- Teiser: Your sweet wine organization still does exist?
- Powers: Oh yes. But as I say, we only meet if and when there's something serious.
- Teiser: And that only takes in the immediate Fresno area?
- Powers: Well, no, part of the membership goes south, on down as far as Delano. As I say, I haven't been active, so I don't know just who's who or what they're doing.
- Teiser: Will you go back in the wine industry if there's stability in it, do you think?
- Powers: Well. I want to sell my properties now because I've reached that age in life where most people are retiring.

#### CALIFORNIA WINERIES AND NATIONAL CORPORATIONS

- Teiser: There's another general trend that took place--or that has taken place--that I wonder if you couldn't throw some light on. There was an earlier round of purchases of California wineries by national companies, then they got out, and now they're getting back in. Can you explain how that has come about?
- Powers: Well, again, a lot of this depends on the inner workings of an organization. Now you take Schenley. Schenley, as you know, is a big hard liquor company, and they're very much interested in the grape picture, but I hear rumors that they're anxious to sell.





Teiser: I think it's known that their Roma and Cresta Blanca properties are up for sale, isn't it?

Powers: Yes.

Teiser: But at one time, for example, Italian Swiss Colony was bought by a national company...

Powers: It was National Distillers.

Teiser: ...Which then sold it back to local interests. Why did the companies come in and then sell again at that point?

Powers: Well, I think this, you've got the situation within a company. The whole situation of national distribution is a very big undertaking, and you've got to have the manpower and the capital and the outlets and all of that to handle it. And you can buy up more than you can handle and not have something that is profitable. Now, Heublein is back today in a very big way, and Heublein was aggressive right at the beginning of Repeal. They were in the brandy business, producing brandy. But I think they lost their shirt. And so here they are, how long ago has this been? Thirty-six years later. It's only in the last year or so. They came in last year. They bought a big tomato cannery down in Southern California to produce this special Bloody Mary drink, don't you know.

And I'm toying with a product for them now with persimmons. The persimmon makes a marvelous drink, that is, my frozen persimmon, with rum or gin or brandy. It is very fruity, flavorsome, and ladies like it because you are not conscious of any alcohol, and most ladies don't like the taste of alcohol or anything near that. But they can't use the persimmon unless I can turn the persimmon into just a clear juice. Now this is a difficult problem because the persimmon in a puree form is very satisfactory. I can see, people might complain because it was cloudy but then [laugh] that plays no part in its taste or anything else. But as I say, Heublein--I give this as an example of how companies will go through various changes, in answer to your question. And I think there are too many problems involved there for most of them to solve them.

Teiser: Well, maybe they think they can now by better management.

Powers: That's right, and different ideas.



## SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WINERIES

- Teiser: Let me ask you just a little bit, if I may, about each of these other Fresno area wineries on this list of members of the Central California Wineries, Inc. of the late 1930's. There's Bisceglia Brothers.
- Powers: Yes; they're back in business. They've been in and out, oh, the last 36 years. They were originally canners over in San Jose. That was the first generation. They're dead now. This is the second generation. They've got a winery over here. It was a co-op near Madera, and they've got a very nice plant there. They're making wine--this Hawaiian wine--over there with pineapple juice and one thing and another. This Bruno Bisceglia, the manager, outspoken manager, he's quite aggressive.
- Teiser: Crest View Winery, Inc.?
- Powers: Yes, Mr. Joe Gazzara was the owner of that, and Joe passed away.\* He just came up the line. He started in a very nice plant. That's located on one of my father's ranches. He had a packing house there. The packing house is still there. About four miles this side of Sanger.
- Teiser: Did he build that winery?
- Powers: No, Mr. [J.B.] Perenchio first built it. Mr. Perenchio bought the property from my father, and Mr. Perenchio built it. Mr. Gazzara, though, installed a lot of new equipment and modernized it. He was very successful.
- Teiser: Fresno Winery, Inc. What was that?
- Powers: Oh, that isn't in operation now. Mr. Coleman Caine had that. That's over by the state college. It is on Shaw and Winery Avenue, which is right adjoining the Fresno State University.\*\*
- Teiser: West of Clovis?
- Powers: Yes, it's just between Clovis and the state college. It has since been dismantled.

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\*July 9, 1968.

\*\*Later California State University, Fresno.



Teiser: St. George Winery?

Powers: That was one of the very early wineries. Mr. George Malter owned it and he was a terrific person, very fascinating and interesting. He was a Viennese and he was an engineer of great ability. He came down into the San Joaquin Valley many years ago. He was a very close friend of my father's and we visited with him a great deal. He married late in life and had one son, but he never liked the wine business. And so Mr. Malter sold. He was an elderly man anyway, by that time Prohibition was voted out and Repeal became effective. And he sold his interest to Mr. [Beverly W.] Goldthwaite, who is now deceased. But Mr. Goldthwaite was a very fine business man and he developed a very fine business in the St. George Winery.

He likewise acquired the Cameo Vineyards winery from Mr. Harry Hitzl. And Mr. Hitzl had built the Cameo Winery, he and his partner had built that up into a fine business, but they wanted to retire and Mr. Goldthwaite bought them out, too, and operated that and the St. George Winery. I don't know what's going on with St. George now. It was one of the very oldest plants we have here.

Teiser: Was it started by Mr. Malter?

Powers: Yes, he started it. And he planted all the palm trees out through the place, which was the thing to do in those days.

Teiser: What kind of grapes did he grow?

Powers: He didn't grow any grapes at all. He was just a processor, brandy and wine.

Teiser: I think I've asked you about all of them in this area on this list. Were there any other outstanding wineries around here?

Powers: No, you've pretty well covered them. There's been a few new ones. There's the Del Rey Co-op; it's operated on a co-op basis. That's a very nice plant.

Teiser: The co-op system seems to be one that the wineries find workable?

Powers: Yes. Of course the rise and fall of prices more or less should be borne, I feel, by the grower. And then the grower



Powers: has the potential in his hand by organizing and by showing good judgment to make it very profitable.\* The vintner, of course, like Gallo--Gallo has developed, of course and this again is very very important--he has developed a good merchandising organization. That's where they make their big money, actually, in the volume and plus the profits when you deal on a large scale, which they do.

Of course, as I look back on these things now, I was kind of stupid to pull out of the wine business and not continue on with it, you know, but I found myself in too many fields, ranching, law and all, and as a result, these things can be confusing. I'd like to produce some wine grapes today because the new varieties of wine grapes that we can grow here, oh, it's like falling out of the window. It's just that easy because you can grow all the way from 15 to 20 tons an acre, whatever you want. Of course, with certain varieties you don't want the tonnage so much as the quality. But most of those varieties are better adapted to the cooler climates. And you're going to see a tremendous amount of acreage planted over on the coast because over on the other side of this coast range, your climate changes very materially, and your temperatures, you know, are in the 60's and 70's the year round. The heat here is wonderful for producing sugar, but when you want a good table wine, you want the flavor rather than the sugar. And those certain varieties that demand that, like the Chardonnay and all the other very fancy varieties, you know you don't get good tonnages but you get real quality.

Teiser: The wine grapes that you can grow here now that you couldn't before, were they varieties developed by the University?

Powers: Yes. That's right. Everything would indicate that they're going to be successful here, but right now it's difficult to get rootstock and all, because naturally this is the limiting factor. And as a result they can't produce enough grapes.

I get an awful kick out of Europe. Good wines over there are very scarce in spite of all the grapes they have. Of course, again, they don't have a climate like ours. As you probably know if you've traveled there, they have

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\*See also pp. 42-44.





Powers: tremendous winters. And the thing that bothers them most is the fact that just when they're ready for the maturing period, the last couple of months before the grapes are finally ripe, is when they have all those darned storms come whipping through. And that's one reason some seasons, like the '65 season, there just isn't any production at all for that season. Well, that's terrible, don't you know, because here you have the crop and the next week it's gone. So, as I say, we in California are blessed with this wonderful climate condition you just don't see anywhere else.



(Interview #2 - January 20, 1972)

#### EDUCATION AND LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

Teiser: Would you tell a little more about your student days at U.C. Berkeley?

Powers: Well, I enrolled in Berkeley in the fall of 1920.

Teiser: How many students there then, about?

Powers: Just a guess, graduates, and all, it was around ten or twelve thousand. I was in Kappa Sigma fraternity, and as I mentioned, I was a good friend of Cort Majors in football.

I also mentioned previously having been more or less injured, so to speak, by virtue of an operation that I had at the end of my sophomore year, which necessitated me more or less sitting it out during my junior year. When I went back in my senior year, I trained again with the varsity. Of course by that time Cort Majors had graduated.

Teiser: Did you have time to study?

Powers: Oh, sure. Studies came first because I majored in law, you see. I was pre-legal. And then after graduation, we just went right on through with our regular courses through Boalt Hall.

Teiser: What year did you get your law degree?

Powers: 1926. Six years.

Teiser: Have you been active in the Alumni Association?



- Powers: Not too much. We're at a disadvantage here in the Valley. I've helped organize a fraternity at Fresno State. We had a chapter here, the original fraternity, but it just kind of petered out, so to speak, after about eight or ten years, which is unfortunate. In Berkeley, I was active in Skull and Keys and also the other honor society.
- Teiser: Did you enjoy going to college?
- Powers: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Tremendously, as you might well suspect. Oh, yes.
- Teiser: Did you come back to Fresno reluctantly, then?
- Powers: Oh, yes. But that's what you have to expect, don't you know. I always enjoyed Fresno.
- Teiser: When were you in the legislature?
- Powers: I went to the legislature in the days of James Rolph. His son and I were very close friends in college. Paul Jordan was also a very close friend of Mr. Rolph and myself. And Arthur Carlson; he was state president of the Republican party organization. He unfortunately died, I guess it must be about ten years ago. Mr. Jordan was one of the trial lawyers in San Francisco.
- Teiser: What years did you serve in the legislature?
- Powers: I was elected in '30, but then your term actually starts the 1st of January, so it was '31, '32, '33, and then '34.
- Teiser: You were a very young legislator, weren't you?
- Powers: Well, as legislators go. We had many younger than myself. Ray Robinson from Merced, who is very outstanding. He and I were very good friends. He was a couple of years younger than I am. He's still alive, but his health is bad. I've always been indebted to him, because he and his dear wife introduced me to my wife.\* She was Judge [E.M] Rector's daughter. A pioneer family, the Rector family. He was a very fine Superior Court judge, with forty years on the bench.

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\*Born Geraldine Rector.



Powers: The Rector family were early pioneers in Merced. They settled before there was any town of Merced, on the river, which was to be expected, don't you know, in pioneer times.

Teiser: What was the immediate cause of your standing for the legislature?

Powers: Well, I was interested in politics. My father was likewise very much interested in politics. Public service is something that appeals to me.

My father was killed three days before Repeal. This man ran into him. My father was coming back from the winery, and I had gone to Sacramento to attend a State Board of Equalization meeting. So he was driving his car, a Cadillac. He was about six miles, mid-way between Fowler and Fresno, on the main highway, and it looked like this car in front of him was going to be hit by this oncoming car. So he put on his brakes and was virtually dead still in the road. And this man yanked his wheel very viciously to the right and went off onto the railroad right of way. There was no fence. And this man just came back and caught my father dead still there in the road. Then his car turned over and his car started to burn, and this other man, who turned out to be a druggist from Orange Cove, who was in the front car, came back and he and my father--my father gets out and helps take this man out of the burning car. Which is something he never should have done, because he had punctured his arteries, and he bled to death. Anyway, he got this man out, and his brothers took my father in to the emergency hospital and saw it was a serious case, and moved him to the community hospital.

I got home and got this message, and I dashed to the hospital. All he was doing was breathing his last. He never became conscious.

Teiser: That was 1933?

Powers: Yes, 1933.

Teiser: He lived to see you in the legislature.

Powers: Oh yes. He greatly enjoyed it. He attended the legislature, and we had grand balls and social events. Of course he was quite an admirer of James Rolph.





Teiser: Then you were in the legislature just at the time of Repeal. Were you active at all in any wine legislation?

Powers: Well, there wasn't very much in the works at the moment. Everybody was more or less sitting back waiting to see what would happen.

#### WINE INDUSTRY PROBLEMS OF THE 1930's

Teiser: Would you give an account of your meeting with President Roosevelt that you mentioned?\*

Powers: Well, it was in the White House, of course, in what you might call the "sun room." Have you got the date there?

Teiser: It must have been early in '35.

Powers: That's what I thought it was. Early '35.\*\* My wife and I both went east together.

Roosevelt was quite solicitous. [Laughing] He had described a situation somewhat similar that he'd been interested in, when his law firm was called to organize an industry meeting in New York State. He had the big task of hauling some of the law books to the meeting. [Laughter] The way he described it! But he turned to me personally, later on, after it broke up, and said, "Mr. Powers, very happy to meet you. We like to have more young people like yourself interested in government. Like to see you back here." Of course he was an ardent Democrat, and I was an ardent Republican. [Laughter] It was a very pleasant experience.

We had a problem that was behind the scenes in this whole operation of organizing. We had the independents, who were like myself. And then there was the old California Wine Association group. And they had dictated and run the wine industry. We were not about to hand the reins of governing this industry over to them.

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\*Page 26.

\*\*See appendix.



- Powers: This was one of the issues that was quite obvious in our deliberations.
- Teiser: You said that the California Wine Association was dictatorial?
- Powers: Well, it had been. This was the carryover from the old days. Was it fifteen years or so that the wine industry was "outlawed" you might say? [Laughter]
- Teiser: Yes. But you still remembered?
- Powers: Oh, yes. And this was obvious to our people, because the California Wine Association as such was pretty much of a closed organization. And they took care of themselves, which was to be expected, but they also brought upon themselves certain problems because they were somewhat dictatorial. This was what independent people like Arthur Tarpey and others in the industry remembered from the old days. Arthur Tarpey and Lee Jones. Arakelian was another.
- As far as I can see, we had nothing to really be alarmed about, because this was a new game altogether. The biggest majority were all new to the industry, and there was no particular group there that was trying to crack the whip or dictate, or run things. So our fears were somewhat groundless. Nevertheless, you can imagine that it was more or less natural to keep in mind the way the California Wine Association had run things in their day.
- Teiser: Fruit Industries, Limited, was organized partly on the basis of the old California Wine Association.
- Powers: Yes. They had people that still had their vineyards. Some of them still had their wineries. As a result it was only natural that they endeavored to put their organization in good shape.
- Teiser: So you recognized that Fruit Industries was somewhat the same as the California Wine Association?
- Powers: Yes, because of their early-day association together.
- Teiser: On this occasion that you called on President Roosevelt, I see that Walter Taylor was with you, as a representative of Fruit Industries.



- Powers: That's right. A very fine person, too. Mr. Walter Taylor was a fine businessman and very cooperative.
- Teiser: By then had your differences disappeared, or had your fears been allayed?
- Powers: Well, you might put it this way: they were a large organization, and they had been well established, and more or less, you might say, in the saddle in their day. We always looked twice at everything they participated in for that reason. Which was only natural. But, as I say, as I look back on it, I don't think we had anything to be fearful of. But nevertheless, it was just human nature to anticipate problems. In the main, I would say, they never gave us any trouble. And they likewise gave us good men, and good leadership.
- Teiser: Did you ask anything specific of President Roosevelt? Did you say, "Will you help us to get this, or will you back us in our efforts to get that?"
- Powers: Well, there were matters that were discussed with him, naturally, which he indicated he was anxious to see that were properly cared for. He was quite cooperative.
- Teiser: What sort of matters were they?
- Powers: Well. Of course, in an industry which is regulated by regulation on top of regulation, there are many things that could be well given proper attention, don't you know, in favor of the industry. That is, without putting undue burdens on the industry.
- Teiser: I suppose the question of taxes, and paperwork?
- Powers: Regulations. You see, we have regulations regarding how grapes would be crushed, how they'd be distilled, how the wine would be made. Of course, a lot of it was for the sake of protection of the government, tax problems and security problems, all of which are terribly important. You've always got somebody that wants to shortcut the legal routine.

One of the very serious early day lawsuits involved Mr. Bert Turner who had married Mr. [J.B.] Cella's daughter\* and was operating a distillery. They had a certain amount of brandy that wasn't tax paid. And of course the government

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\*Ebe Cella



- Powers: was naturally trying to close any loopholes of that type. This is typical of what you can expect. People want to try and take advantage of regulations that have loopholes in them. Of course that in the end hurts the industry as well as the government.
- Teiser: Well, were you asking Roosevelt for help in maintaining high industry standards?
- Powers: Yes. That's what we wanted and expected.
- Teiser: But not oppressively high?
- Powers: That's right. Oh, no. What we wanted was wine that was made out of complete juice of the grape, for one thing. This sugar situation was something we were not going to have any part of. But the people over east, New York and Ohio, and other areas, wanted the right to use sugar. Well, we said, "We're not going to tell you how to run your business, but any wine made in California has got to be made strictly from the grape." So that's the way that was handled.

We went all out for quality. This was one thing our sweet wine group, and not only that but the Wine Institute, wanted, to improve on wine and brandy. We set up a fund, and charged ourselves so much a gallon, to police this and to regulate it, and to run it. This is where we hired the services of the University of California at Davis, and then subsequently the state colleges and junior colleges to help us in producing better wines and better brandies as time went on.

And of course we also had an appropriation, something like two cents a gallon,\* I remember, to advertise wine and the good features of wine, and to bring people like doctors and others into our trade promotion program. All of which has gone a long way toward bringing the industry into focus. Now you take other industries I'll mention: the almond industry has done the same thing. They've taken a leaf out of our book, so to speak. Every farm industry has got to do this. That's the reason why I mentioned persimmons. I wanted the persimmon people to do the same thing.

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\*On dessert wines, and one cent on table wines.





- Teiser: Back to this period of the beginning of legislation after Repeal. Were there any regulations you were afraid the government might put on the industry that you didn't want?
- Powers: Oh, yes, there were, from time to time, you know, regulations that we felt were unfair to the industry.
- Teiser: What kind of things would they be?
- Powers: Oh, that you had to make wine a certain way, and do certain things, and all this and that. After all, you're working with bureaucrats, and they're looking at things from their viewpoint. We, being, you might say, wine men, interested in wine and brandy, had very definite ideas of what couldn't be done, or shouldn't be done for the good of the industry.
- Teiser: There were not federal regulations about how wine was to be sold or served?
- Powers: Well, to a certain extent. This was naturally a big part of the problem in setting up our regulations so we could live with them. And also the government was naturally interested in collecting their revenue. But by the same token, we didn't want any member of the industry to be shortcutting, because it would only hurt the industry in the long run.
- Teiser: I suppose you wanted to keep prices level but without price-fixing, and that's a ticklish thing, isn't it?
- Powers: Oh, yes. Quite right.
- Teiser: How do you do it?
- Powers: Well, the industry endeavored to agree on a mode of approach to it. This was worked out so that everybody was happy and got along. But we found that, basically, the trade were quick to catch on to whether a winemaker was doing a good job, and it wasn't long before they were willing to pay you, actually, a premium for the quality. When you get a reward like that, it's something you can appreciate. This took place at first. The first few years, a lot of people thought, well, anybody that had wine just had it made. That wasn't true, because it was just a few months before it became very obvious that the buying trade was very critical of quality. Many wine people went out of business, because poor wines or brandies just wouldn't sell, and the next



- Powers: thing they knew they were in the hands of their creditors. So unless you were quality-minded, as well as a good businessman, this was something you had to live with.
- Teiser: I guess there was a lot of competition, wasn't there?
- Powers: Oh, yes. Of course at first there was a shortage, naturally, of any wine that had any age to it, you know. Some of the people like Arakelian and Cribari and others had been making sacramental wines, and they had a start on us, don't you know. So this was where we had to separate the men from the boys.
- Teiser: I forget how many companies there were in the '30's. They certainly have narrowed down.
- Powers: Oh, yes. Well, they went out of business very fast, because, well, competition just made it necessary.
- Teiser: There were two other associations that I came across. One was the San Joaquin Valley Wine Association.
- Powers: Well, that didn't last very long.
- Teiser: And the other was the Muscat Growers' Winery Association.
- Powers: Well, both of those were actually private companies. The Muscat co-op, Mr. Barr was one of the early day organizers of that. Ted Barr at Sanger. The Muscat co-op was a cooperative. It's still going today, but it's not going under the name of Muscat. It's now part of the wine co-op up north in Lodi, the Guild group.

#### CENTRAL VALLEY COOPERATIVE WINERY

- Teiser: You mentioned the Central Valley Cooperative Winery that you said you put together. What was the immediate impetus for it?
- Powers: Well, first we wanted to help try and stabilize the wine picture. We also felt that there was a profit that as growers we could capture in putting our wine into a good



# The wineries of San Joaquin



A. B. Tarpey  
President  
of San Joaquin  
Valley  
Wine Association

and Sam Kaplan, Alta Winery; G. Maselli, Jr., Maselli Winery; E. Creberi, Las Palmas Winery; P. J. Otto, M. Bruno and Dr. M. P. Bowen, Bruno Brothers Winery; E. P. Cain, Henrietta Rancho Products Company; Joseph Allegretti, Kearney Winery; N. D. Naman, Santa Lucia Winery; A. M. Paul, California Products Company, and M. P. Lohse, industrial secretary, Fresno County Chamber of Commerce.

## New Association in San Joaquin Valley

Providing a set-up to attack wine makers' and grape growers' problems through collective bargaining, the **San Joaquin Valley Wine Association** has been formed by industry leaders in the interior California region with practically every winery in the district represented.

Leading wine and juice grape growers are to be included in the association as affiliated members without voting power to give the members of the association virtual control of many phases of the industry in the territory represented.

**A. B. Tarpey**, prominent grape grower and head of the **La Paloma Winery** of Fresno, is president and State Assemblyman **Lucius Powers, Jr.**, manager of the **Mt. Tivy Winery**, heads the directors. **K. Arakelian**, of the **Madera Winery**, is vice-president.

Taxation, warehousing and federal regulation are the chief problems the group is interested in at present, according to **Paul K. Holland**, secretary-treasurer. Holland has opened headquarters for the association in the T. W. Patterson Building, Fresno.

The board includes **Frank Goldthwaite**, **St. George Winery**, Fresno; **Harry Hitzl**, **California Growers' Winery Corporation**; **Charles Dubbs**, **Alta Winery**, Delano; **Sam Harkleroad**, **Mattie Winery**, Fresno; **A. Perelli-Monetti**, **Wallace Winery**, Delano; **L. M. Martini**, **Kingsburg Winery**, Arakelian and Tarpey.

"Strict federal regulation is a burden on the industry," Holland said. "All but about thirty pages of regulations contained in two volumes concern the sweet wine industry of which this group draws practically a 90 per cent membership. We feel that these regulations can be loosened considerably now that prohibition has been done away with."

Powers said the group stands for "fair and equitable taxation if it is decided to tax the wine industry," while other members expressed opinions that the industry should not be taxed at this time. Virtual embargo on foreign wines is favored.

Problems of warehousing, both in respect to fortified wines and commercial brandy, will be threshed out by directors at an early meeting.

Those who attended the recent organization meeting of the group, in addition to the officers, are **S. L. Kass**, **Pacific Coast Winery**, Fresno; **Hugo Malter**, **St. George Winery**; **A. Setrakian**, **California Growers' Winery Corporation**; **Carl Hitzl**



Powers: winery, a good operation. We could make part of the profit that the vintner was putting into his pocket. So, as growers, we found that we could make from ten to twenty dollars a ton profit for ourselves by going through the cooperative channels. Now we at the same time didn't want to run the winery. So we went to people like Eddie Arakelian--this was the son of K. Arakelian--and Mr. Vas Gunner. They had taken over Frank Giannini's plant at Tulare.

And so we delivered our grapes to them, and then they charged so much for crushing and managing, and then so much again for selling it, and all. So we had all the services, just as if we had our own winery. But we did not have any money involved in the plant. We paid a processing charge which gave them a nice profit on their plant. They likewise were very happy because they were also making a profit on their sales. In other words, we paid them a profit on selling, and also a profit on crushing and distilling.

Teiser: They warehoused it for you?

Powers: Yes. And they would follow our directions on how we wanted to sell, and when we wanted to sell, and all that sort of thing.

Teiser: Who in your organization was in immediate charge then, of the program?

Powers: I was, at the inception, because of all the growers, I was the only one who had had any winery experience.

Teiser: So you knew when to tell them to sell?

Powers: That's right. We had some of the very top grape growers here in the valley in our membership.

Teiser: Who were they? Do you remember?

Powers: Well, Chauncey Bianchi. He was the president of our group. He was from Lodi and also around Manteca. He's one of the very large grape growers up there. I had signed all these people up, and being a lawyer, drafted their agreement, how we would operate with, say, Arakelian. We first started with Henry Krum, and Mr. N. D. Namen. They had the Santa Lucia Winery.





# GRAPE

# GROWERS

## This VITAL MESSAGE Concerns YOU

Our negotiations for the purchase and operation of the Kingsburg Winery, owned by Roma, means that our organization will be better able to serve you in ALL ways, especially NOW when crushing facilities at many plants are crowded. It will also give many NEW GROWERS an opportunity to own or acquire, without any deduction, a HOME for their grape crops, in good weather or bad. It will help SAVE your grape crop VALUES when market prices are only a fraction of the COST of production and harvest, as at the present time.

Our 1952 crushing operations have ALREADY COMMENCED at the Tulare Winery owned by Eddie Arakelian and Vas Gunner. Here over 48,000 tons were very satisfactorily crushed and sold in the last 3 seasons.

It is anticipated the total crush at both wineries in 1952 might exceed 40,000 tons. We have a proven and an established sales program which makes it possible for CYC to pay its members the highest possible returns in keeping with the prevailing wine market.

The officers and directors of the Central Valley Cooperative Winery, Inc., are as follows:

President—C. G. Bianchi, 2651 Kensington Drive, Stockton

Vice-President—David Pinkham, Box 157, Exeter

Treasurer—William Parlier, 667 Home Avenue, Fresno

Secretary-Manager—Lucius Powers, 1104 Fulton-Fresno Bldg., Fresno

#### Directors:

North—C. G. Bianchi, Stockton

Fresno—William Parlier, Fresno

Lawrence Lindgren, Rt. 1, Box 59,  
Kingsburg

Tulare—John N. Dungan, 125 Portola Ave.,  
Exeter

Fred Lagomarsino, P.O. Box 981,  
Tulare

Jack Sisler, 1607 Beverly Drive, Visalia

Kings-Kern-Tulare—David Pinkham, Exeter

#### Alternate Directors:

North—Joe Bianchi, 115 Veach, Manteca

Fresno—Andrew Mattei, 401 Franklin Ave.,  
Fresno

K. Kitahara, Rt. 1, Box 96, Kingsburg

Tulare—Charles Davidson, P.O. Box 277,  
Exeter

C. H. Trembley, Security Bank Bldg.,  
Tulare

Don Pinkham, Box 456, Exeter

Kings-Kern-Tulare—O. L. Gaither, Strathmore  
Grape Growers, Strathmore

New membership applications are NOW being accepted. Call  
ANY of the following numbers:

FRESNO 2-2127

SELMA 67-J-2

TULARE 6-2807

KINGSBURG 2984

KINGSBURG 2072

LINDSAY 2-3643

Central Valley Cooperative Winery, Inc.



Teiser: They did your first processing?

Powers: Yes. Then we subsequently went with Mr. Arakelian, Eddie Arakelian and Gunner. Then both of them died, and we went with the people who bought Mr. Arakelian and Gunner's plant at Tulare. We delivered our grapes to Tulare. And then he sold out to someone from Bakersfield who came up. I can't recall his name now. He had it for a couple of years. Then he in turn sold out. The organization has lately gone with Mr. Riddell.

Teiser: It still operates now?

Powers: Oh, yes. It has a lot of fine growers.

Teiser: Was the Argun Wine Company involved at any time?

Powers: Yes.

Teiser: Was that one of your members, or was it one of your processors?

Powers: It was one of our processors. That was Eddie Arakelian and Gunner.

Teiser: That was their company. I see. Was Argun the name under which they were operating the Tulare winery that had earlier been owned by Frank Giannini?

Powers: Yes--that was the history of that plant.

Teiser: Your organization was legally a cooperative, that status?

Powers: That's right, an incorporated cooperative.

Teiser: As a cooperative you had then access to funding that you wouldn't have had as a private corporation?

Powers: Well, we could have, but we've never used it. And of course, you can get cheaper money that way. Just like they do with the Home Loan Bank. People there borrow on their ranches, get loans on their ranches, and as you say, again, it's cheaper money.

Teiser: But you didn't require it?

Powers: No. We could have gone to the Agricultural Production Credit Association if we had wanted to.



Teiser: Did you have any dealings directly with J.B. Cella?

Powers: No. J.B. Cella was quite a leader. He had organized and bought out quite a few vineyards up in the Lodi district. We had a winery over in the Sanger district, near our ranches there--it was an old winery--and he bought that and converted it into a very fine plant. His daughter married Louis Petri. Of course the Petri people have always been in the wine business. There are quite a few operators in Lodi and San Francisco.

Teiser: I should think that Roma might at one time have been a threat to all the rest of you the way the California Wine Association had been.

Powers: Yes, they were. That's right. But basically our wineries were well managed and well organized, so that they were profitable and were likewise a great credit to the industry.

Teiser: So by then you didn't have to be afraid?

Powers: That's right. They got to producing a poorer product, and they went the way of any industry that isn't just out there in front, don't you know. You're either a frontrunner or a backrunner.

Teiser: Why would any wine man allow that to happen?

Powers: Well, you develop certain standards, which in my opinion are just asking for a downfall. You've got to be constantly on the alert. In other words, things keep changing, and the wine industry has changed considerably in the way of production. You've got to stay with the latest techniques. Otherwise your product is such that, competitively, you're at a disadvantage.

Teiser: Do you think they became complacent?

Powers: Well, in some ways they got too big. They weren't taking proper care of their product. This is where competition very quickly catches up with you. Before you know it, you don't have any customers. What do you do when you're in ill graces? In other words, you're just asking for it. So this is what happened to Roma. They started out fine. Mr. Cella's son-in-law, Bert Turner, was their manager here, running the show and going great guns, and expanding. But somewhere along



Powers: the line things began to fall to pieces. Just lately, they've gone out of the business here. So, as I say, these things can happen.

This is true of everything, though, in our competitive system, don't you know? In other words, what you see here is true in automobiles, and other things as well. It's the free enterprise system manifesting itself.

Teiser: What is this photograph?

Powers: Oh, [laughing] it's a fruit packing house. The way we packed fruit in the early days.

Teiser: This was your father's fruit company. I see.

Powers: Now, these are some pictures of the vineyards. You were asking about that. This is part of the Powers Ranch out at Centerville. My father was a great person for pictures; he liked pictures! There he is again.

Teiser: Who are the other people in that picture?

Powers: Oh, I think my mother and his foreman. I can't see this other person too well. They're at a distance. This was taken from a water tower or something. This is out at our ranch. These, we've got covered here, are raisins. They're raisin trays. They stack them and they go through a process of drying.

Teiser: About when was this series taken, do you think?

Powers: Oh, this was taken about forty years ago.

Teiser: Before Repeal?

Powers: Yes. Here's one packing house here. He had five altogether. You can see the age of the pictures [laughing] by the automobiles.

Teiser: Automobiles and still some teams. What were the barrel-like things?

Powers: Those were chests, they called them, and they would pack grapes in those with sawdust, and then they'd ship the grapes to the Orient, or to the East, or elsewhere. Of





- Powers: course, they were frozen. They were kept in refrigeration all the time. They would hold about forty pounds each. This is another picture of our ranch. This is the ranch headquarters over here, with these buildings; you see the barns there.
- Teiser: I can see your father must have enjoyed ranching and taken great pride in it.
- Powers: Oh, yes. He was shipping cars of grapes, mostly grapes. A few persimmons and a few plums, but the grapes of course were his big interest.

#### RECENT WINE INDUSTRY TRENDS

- Teiser: Were there other things that you thought should be added to this discussion? I think we discussed the 1961 set-aside when there was a conflict between A. Setrakian and Ernest Gallo.\*
- Powers: Yes. Mr. Gallo had come to the meeting. It was at the Californian Hotel. Mr. Setrakian was quite a fiery personage by nature [laughing], and very capable and learned and bright and smart. But he would step on other people's toes any time he felt like it. He happened to have quite a few grapes processed at this particular time. Mr. Setrakian was taking Gallo to task for having paid too high a price for grapes. As a result the raisin crop had been considerably shortened, because the growers went after the quick dollar. That left a shortage of raisins.

Of course, the set-aside was for the purpose of trying to maintain a good grape price. The following year, after this, we had just the reverse, because we had too many people anxious to sell to the wineries, and as a result, we had a very low grape price.

Anyway, Mr. Gallo was very decent about it. I've come to be quite an admirer of Mr. Gallo. To me it's just unbelievable the foresight of that man. Anybody that will continue to increase his crushing and processing at the rate of over twenty million gallons of wine a year! Twenty million gallons is a tremendous amount of wine. But the planting of vineyards today almost scares you. I do think

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\*P. 27.



Powers: that Gallo is going to see some good years here before this thing is overproduced, because they're producing wine today that people enjoy, and they're producing better wine than we produced in our day. It's a wine that is healthful, and it's very appealing, and they're likewise coming up with new varieties that are in my opinion very popular, and going to be popular. We in America have never been a wine drinking nation but now the health values of wine, and the niceties of good wine, are all contributing to a very heavy consumption.

Of course, when you stop and look at that, you can begin to understand. When you compare the amount of wine we drink in America to what they drink in Europe, why, we've still got a tremendous long way to go. And of course this is what Ernie Gallo is looking at. Because you'll see this country drinking more and more wine, year after year. And this is going to continue to increase.

Teiser: Where's the land going to come from?

Powers: Well, of course, at this point we've got plenty of land. But actually this expansion and great increase just scares people, don't you know? Because everything is relative, after all is said and done. I definitely feel, because of the good foundation that was laid at the beginning, this is paying off now. We're getting the dividends now.

#### THE POWERS SCHOOL

Teiser: You have a photograph there of the Powers School.

Powers: Yes. I'm fortunate in having it named after me.

Teiser: Here in Fresno?

Powers: Yes. I'm very proud of it, because if you can believe it, they put these youngsters through a regular course, starting right out in kindergarten, and the first grade and the second grade, on reading, and they're being evaluated and graded. The part that they're deficient on they go right back and train them on their deficiencies. I'm very proud of them. It's got an outstanding principal, Leonard Ross. He's just unbelievable.



Teiser: They're lucky to have a good school.

Powers: Well, I was instrumental in the legislature in putting certain legislation through for educational purposes. The state would loan us money to build schools. And we would have to levy a tax to pay off the loan, of course. But it was a way that was done much more cheaply than the old system. It hadn't existed previously.

Transcriber: Jane West

Final Typist: Keiko Sugimoto



## APPENDIX

Excerpts from Wine Institute Report, February 19, 1935

"A delegation representing the wine industry called upon President Roosevelt on February 13th. This delegation included Lucius Powers, Jr., First Vice-President of the Wine Institute; Walter E. Taylor of Fruit Industries, Ltd.; Secretary Harry A. Caddow of the Wine Institute; Congressman Frank H. Buck of California; Judge Marion De Vries, counsel for the Institute; and Mr. Underhill, who represents the upper New York wine interests. Mr. Caddow reports as follows:

'Meeting with the President decidedly successful and satisfactory. President has decidedly sympathetic understanding of all industry problems. ...we have a friend in the President....'

"The presentation to the President was upon the present economic status of the wine industry and what the industry is doing to clean its own house in order to produce quality wines and protect the consumer. Congressman Buck specifically asked the President's support to lower the federal taxes on wine. Judge De Vries pointed out the necessity of maintaining the present tariff on wine in the face of proposed reciprocal trade agreements, to prevent the United States from becoming a dumping ground for the European surplus... Mr. Caddow pointed out the highly significant part the Wine Institute is playing in cleaning the industry's own house, and it is believed that the President is fully conscious of the Wine Institute's work. Mr. Powers pointed out the injustice of many individual states' tax and license treatment of wine. Mr. Taylor outlined the situation confronting the growers....

"Mr. Critchfield and Gerald Pearce report that Mr. Powers, Lee Jones, Mr. Cella and Walter Taylor have been doing splendid work for the wine industry in the East and Middle West."





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 Muscat, 6, 7, 8, 10  
 Thompson Seedless, 6, 7  
 Zinfandel, 10



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